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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PL](#)

SUBJECT: NEW POLISH FOREIGN MINISTER EMPHASIZES IMPORTANCE
OF RUSSIAN RELATIONS

Classified By: POLCOUNS MARY T. CURTIN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) During Ambassador's initial call, Poland's newly named Foreign Minister Stefan Meller said he would travel back to Moscow (where he served as Ambassador until his October 31 appointment) on November 13 to arrange his move back to Warsaw, but also to meet with Foreign Minister Lavrov and, hopefully, President Vladimir Putin. Meller said that a meeting with Putin would be "very important for the Polish-Russian dialogue," and would provide him "new elements" to discuss during his eventual visit to Washington. The Ambassador noted there would be keen interest in any insights he could provide from his visit. Meller added that he also attached great importance to the U.S.-Europe relationship, and said that Russia needed to be a "very, very important" element of the U.S.-Polish-European dialogue. "With your help," he said, "we will be able to move the right way and find balance" in those relationships.

2. (C) The Ambassador emphasized that we greatly value Poland's views on these issues, and urged that Meller make plans for a visit to Washington as soon as possible, in part as a prelude to an early 2006 visit by incoming president Lech Kaczynski. He added that a major concern of ours is the question of Polish troop strength in Iraq. The Ambassador noted that Defense Minister Radek Sikorski had told him the previous day (septel) that no political decision had yet been made, and repeated his request that concerns and decisions about Iraq be communicated in private discussions, rather than through the newspaper. Meller indicated he took the point. (Note: The previous day, MFA Americas Director Henryk Szlajfer told DCM and PolCouns that he believed the government would decide to extend troops through the first half of 2006, but that no decision could be made before the November 10 vote of confidence. End Note)

3. (C) Meller, has served as Ambassador to France and Russia, as well as Deputy Minister, and is a French historian by training. As a young man, he was among a group of Jewish intellectuals who were prevented from working in their fields from 1968-1974, and spent many years writing for underground newspapers. He spent a year teaching French history at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia (1990-1991), and spoke good English. He was relaxed and personable during the visit, but Szlajfer told us afterwards that Meller is battling with Law and Justice (PiS) leaders over pressure to name as Secretary of State a PiS member of parliament whom he finds unacceptable.

ASHE